

BOOK REVIEW

CORAL G. GUEST. 2001. **Painting Flowers in Watercolour, A Naturalistic Approach.** (ISBN 0-88192-509-8, pbk.), Timber Press, 133 SW Second Ave., Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527, U.S.A. Published in association with The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. (Orders: www.timberpress.com, 800-327-5680, 503-227-2878, 503-227-3070 fax). \$19.95, pbk., 128 pp., 78 color illustrations, 43 color figures, 6 b/w figures, 11 line drawings.

You've heard the expression, "Gee, I wish I could paint like that!" or "Where did you learn to draw like that?" To many, art is often considered a gift, but it is a gift one must work for. This is why many latent artists never make that first step. They may feel the task too daunting. For those who have always wanted to try painting and in particular, botanical painting, this instructional and inspirational book is the place to start. In *Painting Flowers in Watercolour*, Coral Guest has simplified and organized her techniques so that anyone, whatever their level of expertise, can benefit.

Coral G. Guest is a full-time botanical artist who conducts courses on naturalistic botanical painting for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and at a number of other venues. Her work has been shown internationally and she has received numerous awards, including a gold medal from the Royal Horticultural Society. She frequently lectures and has written for various magazines.

Coral's techniques in watercolor are impeccably classical and she has painstakingly laid out instructions in a step-by-step way with copious full color visuals and illustrations. Her naturalistic approach helps the novice paint in a systematic but creative way, helping one develop not only technique, but observational skills as well.

Painting Flowers in Watercolour is quite impressive from the get-go with an honorable Foreword by Dr. Shirley Sherwood, noted connoisseur and collector of some of the finest contemporary botanical art in private hands. Dr. Sherwood has collected and commissioned quite a few of Coral's works, in particular, *Lilium longiflorum* which is included as part of the instructional lesson of the book.

The book is divided into two parts. The chapters of Part I are: Equipment, Materials, Plant Material, Work in Progress, The Workspace, The Properties of Watercolour, Watercolour Wash Techniques, Dry Brush Techniques, The Colour Palette, Mixing Greens, The Neutral Tint Mixture, Colour Assessment, Drawing, Composition, The Thumbnail Sketch, Light and the Tonal Sketch, The Colour Study Method.

Part I describes: 1) specific techniques essential to creation of the color and texture of plant surfaces which emphasizes the importance of observational drawing, 2) the purists method of working with transparent watercolor, which utilizes the whiteness of the paper to achieve highlights and pale tints, rather than using white watercolor or opaque white watercolor (gouache). Part II is devoted to: 1) observation of individual flowers in a systematic procedure, applying the methods and techniques described in Part I. 2) specific issues, such as highlight on leaves and various surface textures, are analyzed as they occur. Plants featured are: *Lilium longiflorum*, *Anemone coronaria*, *Delphinium*, *Fritillaria imperialis*, *Canna*, *Camellia japonica*, *Tulipa*, *Strelitzia reginae*. The last part of the book is devoted to: *Botanical Terms*, *Bibliography*, *Suppliers directory* and *Index*.

From this humble artist's point of view, I find it one of the best instructional books on flower painting to date and is finely printed and well designed. I do have a few criticisms, however. There are the odd 'typos' here and there—those kind of pesky typographic errors that the computer's spell check doesn't catch. That is minor stuff of course. More problematic is in the inconsistency of including page numbers within the text when referencing a visual. Occasionally, it is a bit tedious trying to find referenced illustrations and figures without page numbers. Adding a page number as reference to ALL the described visuals in the text would have made a quicker reference for the reader, especially in some of the more involved instructions.—Linny Heagy, Linny/Designer, Illustrator, Arlington, TX, a0005835@airmail.net